



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
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CHAIRMAN
Committee on Ways and Means

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To the Members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives:

With this document the House Committee on Ways and Means presents its recommendations for the Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) General Appropriations Act. The Committee's proposal builds on significant investments that have been made in recent years to the programs and services our constituents value, while also maintaining the fiscal discipline necessary to ensure the Commonwealth is prepared for any financial uncertainty. This budget demonstrates our shared priorities and vision for Massachusetts as a national leader.

Once again, under the leadership of Speaker Robert A. DeLeo, this is a budget that contains no new taxes or increased fees on the citizens of the Commonwealth. This budget also reduces our reliance on one-time revenue sources and notably, for the second consecutive year, does not withdraw any resources from the State's stabilization account. Perhaps even more importantly, this budget certifies that at a minimum, over \$210 million will be deposited into the stabilization account. This will ensure that our "Rainy Day" fund remains at over \$1.47 billion, an important factor in maintaining our already strong credit outlook.

The House Ways and Means budget demonstrates our strong partnership with the cities and towns we represent by delivering historically high levels of local aid, a commitment of \$159 million in new funding. This budget includes a \$42.1 million increase to Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) and a \$105.7 million dollar increase to Chapter 70 education aid. The increase to Chapter 70 guarantees that every school district will receive \$55 per pupil in FY17, more than doubling the FY16 amount of per pupil aid. The proposed budget also maintains full funding of the state's share of the Special Education Circuit Breaker and increases our investment in Regional School Transportation and Charter Schools.

Additionally, the FY17 Committee budget continues to prioritize funding for quality early education. It provides for a \$10 million rate reserve to ensure that early education providers can hire and retain high quality staff. Furthermore, it includes a newly created quality supports account, funded at \$31.5 million, giving the department improved ability to make targeted grants to support and encourage quality based programming.

Recognizing that a highly skilled workforce will be key to unlocking future economic development opportunities and job growth, this budget furthers Speaker DeLeo's vision to expand access to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) curriculum for students across the Commonwealth. The proposal devotes \$9 million in STEM specific funding. These investments include \$4.8 million for STEM starter academies which work to improve student performance in STEM subjects and connect students with STEM fields of employment, and \$2.7 million to increase student participation and performance in AP math and science courses in underperforming school districts.

Combatting opiate abuse has been a major priority of the House of Representatives this legislative session and this budget builds on the 65% increase in funding for services and treatment since FY12. Included is a 13.5% increase in the statewide number of transitional support services beds and provides supportive case management services to an additional 500 clients per year. These amplified resources will help to ensure a continuum of care for those residents of our Commonwealth struggling with opiate abuse.

The House Ways and Means Budget is committed to protecting the programs and services that ensure a positive quality of life for our most vulnerable constituents. This budget guarantees that there will be no change in benefits for any transitional assistance recipient, supports the hiring of 281 new social workers and case managers at the Department of Children and Families, and provides a \$5 million increase at the Department of Developmental Services to support an additional 3,000 families that care for loved ones who are disabled and living at home with flexible supports. Additionally included is an increase in the grants to Councils on Aging to \$10 per senior, and new resources to the Department of Environmental Protection for water quality testing and monitoring. The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) will build on the more than 300% increase in funding it has received since FY10 with \$100 million in funding and 375 new vouchers this fiscal year.

I would like to thank the members of the House Committee on Ways and Means for their input and guidance during the development of this budget. I extend a special thank you to our Vice-Chair, Representative Stephen Kulik of Worthington, and our Assistant Vice-Chair, Representative Benjamin Swan of Springfield for their advice and assistance in crafting this proposal.

I look forward to working closely with all the members of the House of Representatives in the upcoming debate. I know that we will work together to produce a budget that is both fiscally responsible and promotes our shared vision for our constituents and our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



BRIAN S. DEMPSEY
Chairman